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The Unfunny Trials of Graham Linehan

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By Kathleen Hayes

Published September 10, 2025

Graham Linehan seemed to have it made. The Irish comedian had created some of the most successful sitcoms in British history, including "Father Ted" and "The IT Crowd." He'd received five BAFTA Awards. In 2018 he announced that plans for a musical based on "Father Ted" — a show sure to be wildly popular — were in the works. In Britain and Ireland he was considered a national treasure.

And then in 2018, after months of mulling and wondering, "Am I missing something?" he tweeted concerns about "the transgender issue."

His career imploded. The "Father Ted" musical was canceled. Director jobs and comedy appearances were withdrawn amid charges he was a bigot. Almost none of his colleagues defended him. He was repeatedly banned from Twitter and sued. He resorted to hiding his car out of fear it would be repossessed. The backlash was so intense and stressful, his marriage ended. Last year he moved — or fled — to the U.S., where he's found it's still possible to do comedy.

But he refused to stop speaking out about "transgenderism." He'd seen a dead rat and the message "KILL TERFS TRANS POWER" slapped onto a Vancouver rape crisis center that wanted to remain woman-only. He saw a generation of gay kids being told they're actually straight but in the wrong bodies, and that they need drugs and surgeries to cure their "problem." He saw hulking men participate in sports against teenage girls, and women bombarded with violent threats for expressing support for J.K. Rowling. He has a daughter, he says, and a mum, and he used to have a wife. And he knew he couldn't remain silent.

Last week Linehan flew back to the U.K. to appear in court on charges related to a scrap between him and a young "transwoman" among his alleged crimes being "misgendering," referring to his antagonist with male pronouns. On arrival at Heathrow airport, he was met by five policemen who told him he was under arrest for three tweets. As Linehan wrote, "In a country where pedophiles escape prison, where knife crime is out of control, the state had

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three posts (and no, I promise you, I am not making this up)."

Linehan was placed in a cell and interrogated, until a nurse checking his blood pressure found it was dangerously high and he was rushed to an emergency room. He was finally offered release on bail on condition that he not go on Twitter/X: that is, that he agree to a legal gag order.

The censorship, double standards and two-tier policing in Britain today are glaring. Thirty people are arrested every day for speech offenses, including tweets, cartoons and reposts, but they're almost only ever on one side of the political aisle — the one the Labour government deems "right-wing."

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Linehan tweets that if a man refuses to leave a woman-only space and police don't help, the man should be punched in the balls, and he's arrested; while Ian Bristow, an elected Liberal Democratic politician, tweets a meme of a pointed gun and the words "SHUT THE F— UP TERF" and faces no consequences.

Lucy Connolly posted, and quickly deleted, an admittedly vile tweet after three little girls were slaughtered by someone believed to be a migrant, and is sentenced to 31 months in prison; while Ricky Jones, an elected Labour politician, told a crowd, "We need to cut all their throats," referring to anti-migration protesters, and was found not guilty.

As for British Jews, just this week the police refused to let the Campaign Against Antisemitism protest on Sept. 7 outside the headquarters of the BBC; while the police had no problem issuing a permit to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to hold a much larger demonstration ten days later at the exact same location. The BBC headquarters is, in fact, the starting point for many if not most of the proto-pogroms that have rampaged through London week after week. Yet when Jews wanted to protest the BBC spreading Hamas propaganda, the location was suddenly "unsuitable."

May Linehan's arrest for wrongthink mark the beginning of the end of this blatantly unfair and outrageous farce. Certainly he has the spirit for facing it down. He showed up in front of the courthouse

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"Transgender Child" on one side, and "Keep Men Out of Women's Sports" on the other. He not only has every right to express these views, but he is right, and ever larger numbers of people know it.

On the podcast "Triggernometry," Konstantin Kisin asked Linehan why, out of all the terrible things happening in the world, he's focused on the issue of "transgenderism." Linehan responded that even in conservative spaces, people don't seem to understand how key this issue is.

"This is the door that unlocks everything else," he said. "If half the population can dominate the other half and take big slices of the pie, that over a hundred years after the suffragettes we've worked out (I know it's a dread word, but) how to create equity between men and women, and suddenly there's a group of men that are grabbing bits of this pie ..."

The assault on women's rights has only been possible by turning material reality upside down and demanding society go along with it. Seemingly overnight, a woman was not what everyone knew she was, but a category open to any man who claimed to "feel" like a woman, whether or not he had any surgery (the vast majority don't). Not only that, but these "transwomen" were to be regarded as far more oppressed and vulnerable than women, who were demoted as "ciswomen" or "vagina-havers." It was now a criminal offense to say that these newly anointed women were, in fact, men. The ruin of Linehan's career and life were intended to, and did, demonstrate what would happen to those who refused to go along.

But the spell seems to be breaking, and it's thanks to the courage of Linehan, and Rowling, and Helen Joyce, and Abigail Shrier here in the States, and nurse Amy Hamm in Canada and so many others who faced down the mob and refused to parrot the lies.

Still there's a long way to go. Lesbians are still kicked out of Pride parades and threatened for refusing to accept men in their dating pool. Public schools still barrage kids with gender-woo, forcing them to ask themselves whether they're transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer or pansexual. Once-reputable media still refer to "transgender" people according to their chosen pronouns, resulting in such marvels of reportage as "she exposed her penis." Parents still take their children to gender clinics for puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for playing with toys "wrong" for their sex.

Someday, and I hope it is soon, everyone will pretend that they never agreed with any of this. And Graham Linehan and so many other brave men and women may finally receive the homage they are due.

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